

CLEAN VERSION OF SPECIFICATION, CLAIMS AND ABSTRACT

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, beginning at line 8 with the following revised paragraph:

The HCV immunoassay consists of a single nitrocellulose strip with a mixture of recombinant HCV antigens immobilized in a trapping zone 2.4 cm from the top edge of the strip. The nitrocellulose strip is held stationary within a custom-made plastic cassette assembly (FIG. 2A). Oral fluid sample and alkaline phosphatase (AP)-conjugated goat anti-human IgG+IgM+IgA antibody cocktail are added to the conjugate hinge (FIG. 2B) creating a complex of anti-HCV bound by anti-human-AP antibodies. Alternatively, Protein LA conjugated to alkaline phosphatase can be used as the detection molecule. The hinge is then closed and pressed onto the nitrocellulose test strip for 5 seconds. 60 μ l of chase solution is then added to a port on the top of the cassette located just above the hinge region (FIG. 2C) facilitating the migration of sample complex down the nitrocellulose test strip toward the trapping zone while simultaneously washing unbound conjugate antibody through the trapping zone to the bottom wick to prevent non-specific enzyme luminescence within the trapping zone. Upon reaching the trapping zone, the anti-HCV antibody present in the anti-HCV/anti-human-AP complex binds its cognate antigen, thus ceasing its migration. Dried AP substrate is suspended above the trapping zone (FIG. 2A) on a piece of gelbond preventing the substrate from coming into contact with the anti-HCV/anti-human-AP complex in the trapping zone until the cassette is inserted into the luminometer. Four minutes after the addition of the chase solution, the test cassette is inserted into the luminometer. A lever on the back of the cassette is depressed by the luminometer (FIG. 2D) bringing the substrate into contact with the anti-HCV/anti-human-AP complex in the trapping zone, thus initiating the luminescence-generating reaction. Luminescence is measured through the window in the top of the cassette for 1 minute.